



# NEWS

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By Barbara Brackman

## **Kansas Troubles: This Week in Territorial History December 12 - 18, 1854**

In December, two companions arrived in the Territory. James McClure of Indiana and Samuel J. Jones of Virginia had met on the steamer *F.X. Aubry* on the Missouri River, en route to Kansas, where they were going “to seek their fortunes.” The men and their wives became friends, and the families had spent the fall at various boarding houses in Missouri, looking for business opportunities in Westport and Parkville. During a stay in Clay County, McClure “found a very bitter feeling existing in the neighborhood against all Northern men, whom they regarded as abolitionists and dangerous characters. Mr. Jones, who was a pro-slavery man, was treated with great consideration, while I, being a free-state man, although a Democrat, was looked upon with suspicion and as an intruder.”

On a trip into the Kansas Territory in mid December, the two men and a third companion, found attitudes reversed when they spent the night in the tent hotel in Lawrence, getting little sleep as they listened to a noisy discussion denouncing Southerners led by Samuel Wood of Bloomington, “the loudest talker.” Apparently, Samuel Jones kept his origins and politics to himself. The next day, the three traveled west to Bloomington where they met John Wakefield whose cabin was the best they’d encountered, “quite large and comfortable.” McClure recalled Wakefield as “a very prominent man” with “high political aspirations.” He also remembered him as quite a talker. “The judge had written a history of the Black Hawk war, and during our stay I am quite sure he related to us the whole contents of his book. I have felt so convinced of this fact that I have never had any desire to read his work.”\*

Discouraged by the lack of available land close to the Missouri border, the men returned to Westport, where Samuel Jones was hired by Albert Gallatin Boone, Westport’s Postmaster, to run the post office. James McClure continued to look for opportunities in the Territory, spending time at the Shawnee Methodist Mission where he met Governor Reeder. Because he’d heard “from Governor Reeder’s friends that in all probability the territorial capital would be located at Pawnee, near Fort Riley,” McClure and a few other men, including Charles Albright, decided to make the five-day trip to the Fort near the junction of the Kansas and Smoky Hill Rivers. There they found “a number of Reeder’s friends from Pennsylvania....The site had been surveyed and platted, and lots were

being sold at fancy prices.” McClure claimed land near the town along Clark’s Creek and the party returned to Westport. (420 words)

\*Those who have a desire to read Wakefield’s work can find it at the University of Kansas Libraries. *History of the War Between the United States and the Sac and Fox Nations Of Indians*, published in Jacksonville, Illinois in 1834, has been reprinted in the *Garland Library of Narratives of North American Indian Captivities*, volume 49.

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James R. McClure, “Taking the Census and Other Incidents in 1855,” *Kansas State Historical Society Collections*, Volume 8. Pp. 227-250.